SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND ALASKA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

PREPARED FOR
SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES 2001
SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games were held in Anchorage in March 2001, bringing close to 2,000 athletes with mental disabilities and more than 740 coaches from 70 countries to Alaska. As part of the planning for the 2001 winter games, the Game Organizing Committee established the Special Olympics School Enrichment Program. With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the School Enrichment Program contracted with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), at the University of Alaska Anchorage, to learn more about Alaska's special education students.

Knowing how many special education students there are in Alaska, where they live, and what their disabilities are could be quite useful to Special Olympics Alaska in its efforts to recruit more school-age athletes into local area and school programs.

Also, more information about Alaska's special education students can also help Special Olympics Alaska move toward another of its goals: bringing children with and without disabilities together in classrooms, on the playing fields, and in other activities.

Our findings about Alaska's special education students include:

• ***Special education students make up about 13 percent of Alaska's public school enrollment***—just about the same share as special education students make up of public-school students nationwide.

• ***By far the most common kinds of disabilities among Alaska's special education students are specific learning disabilities***. More than half the special education students have these disabilities, which cause children to have difficulty understanding or using spoken or written language; examples are dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

• ***Alaska Natives make up a much larger share of special education students than they do of the population as a whole***. Alaska Natives make up 31 percent of special education students in Alaska, but just 21 percent of all Alaskans ages 6-21. We can't explain why Native students make up a disproportionately large share of special education students, but it is an issue policymakers should examine.

• ***Disabilities shift as children get older,*** with developmental delays most common among children 3 to 5 and learning disabilities most common among those 12 to 17.

• ***Speech and language impairments are more common in smaller districts***—those with enrollments between 10 and 499. In most of those districts, the majority of students are Alaska Native.

• ***In 2000, Alaska was considerably ahead of the nation in placing special education students in regular classrooms***. Excluding pre-schoolers, 59 percent of Alaska's special education students spent most of their day in regular classes, compared with 47 percent nationwide.

• ***Special education students in small districts (those with enrollments of fewer than 500 students) are heavily concentrated in regular classrooms***—in part because fewer placement options are available in the smallest communities. Of Alaska's 53 school districts, 33 have enrollments below 500.

• ***Almost all those with speech or language impairments spend most of their day in regular classrooms***—as of 2000, 92 percent of Alaska students with those disabilities and 87 percent of those students nationwide.

• ***The least likely students to be in regular classrooms for most of the day are those with autism, multiple disabilities, and mental retardation***. Only around 15 percent of students with those disabilities spend a large part of the day in regular classrooms, in Alaska and the U.S. as a whole.

Chapter I. Introduction

When the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games were held in Anchorage in March 2001, among the many benefits Anchorage residents reported was better understanding of people with disabilities.[1] The games brought close to 2,000 athletes with mental disabilities and more than 740 coaches from 70 countries to Alaska.

As part of the planning for the 2001 winter games, the Game Organizing Committee established the Special Olympics School Enrichment Program. With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the School Enrichment Program contracted with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), at the University of Alaska Anchorage, to learn more about Alaska's special education students.

How Can Special Olympics Alaska Use This Report?

Knowing how many special education students there are in Alaska, where they live, and what their disabilities are could be quite useful to Special Olympics Alaska in its efforts to recruit more school-age athletes into local area and school programs. Half the athletes in Special Olympics local area programs are older than school age, and most of the rest are teenagers. By contrast, half of Alaska's special education students are under age 11. The establishment of school-based programs in Alaska is a major step toward bringing more young athletes into Special Olympics. We hope the information in this report will also be helpful in identifying children who could qualify for Special Olympics—which for more than 30 years has proven to be an effective way of increasing self-esteem among those with mental disabilities.

Knowing more about Alaska's special education students can also help Special Olympics Alaska move toward another of its goals: bringing children with and without disabilities together in classrooms, on the playing fields, and in other activities.

What are Special Olympics?

Special Olympics provide athletic competition and year-round training for children and adults with mental disabilities. Since 1968, more than a million athletes from around the world have participated internationally in Special Olympics. "Special Olympics Alaska also traces its beginnings back to 1968. . . . initial interest blossomed into the first state games in Fairbanks in 1969."[2]

To participate in Special Olympics, athletes must be at least eight years old and have been identified by an agency or professional as having mental retardation; cognitive delays as measured by formal assessments; or significant learning or vocational problems due to cognitive delays that require or have required specifically designed instruction. Athletes may also have physical, sensory, emotional or other disabilities—but they must have some mental disability to qualify for Special Olympics. [3]

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[1] ISER survey conducted for *Economic Impact of the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games Alaska*, an ISER report prepared for the Game Organizing Committee, June 2002.
[2] Special Olympics Alaska Web site: http://www.specialolympicsalaska.org/whatis.htm
[3] Special Olympics International Web site:
http://www.specialolympics.org/about_special_olympics/about_soi.html

Why Look at Special Education Students?

Children who could qualify for Special Olympics are generally special education students (although not all special education students can qualify). The Special Olympics program supports teaching special education students as much as possible in regular classes. " . . . 'inclusion' is a contemporary word most often used in reference to school placements [of special education students]; it has been a cornerstone of Special Olympics since its inception in 1968, which is why Special Olympics and Alaska's schools make ideal partners. They share a common mission of providing children and adults with mental disabilities a chance to learn skills, gain confidence, and prepare for the transition to adulthood."[4]

What Was the Original Research Plan?

Before contracting with ISER, the advisory committee of the Special Olympics School Enrichment Program had decided to use a mail survey to collect information from school districts on special education students. The advisory committee specified the questions and the format of the survey. ISER was to administer the survey and analyze the results.

ISER started by e-mailing the survey, called the Alaska Schools Survey, to special education directors in all 53 school districts. We hoped to make the survey more convenient for respondents by setting it up so they could either reply by e-mail or print out the survey and return it by fax. The survey asked about the characteristics of special education students in Alaska, as well as types of schools they attend, special education services available, and other relevant information. (A copy of the questionnaire is included in an appendix.)

We also did follow-ups by e-mail, fax, and telephone. Yet, despite all our efforts, only 8 of the 53 special education directors filled out the questionnaire. While no one refused outright to complete the survey, most ignored it and some said they would complete it only if the school districts required them to. Completing our survey was voluntary. Such a low response rate (less than 15 percent) is inadequate for any analysis. When it became clear that additional follow-ups with special education directors wouldn't produce any more results, we began looking for other sources that would help us provide the information the Special Olympics School Enrichment Program wanted.

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Data Base

Fortunately, we discovered that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development annually collects information on special education students. In 2001, the department began requiring school districts to report that information electronically; it is then recorded in the department's On-Line Alaska School Information System (OASIS) data base. The information in the data base is very similar to what we had asked for in the Alaska Schools Survey.

After learning about that data base, ISER started, in late 2001, talking to department officials about getting access to that information. In the spring of 2002, we received a

[4] Jim Balamaci, letter to educators, *2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games Alaska, School Enrichment Program Curriculum*, August 23, 2000.

portion of the raw data base, containing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) information for special education students as of October 2001. It is worthwhile to note that the file we received may not contain all the updates the department received, and therefore our figures may not match exactly with the published numbers. Also, the file did not include names of students, so we can't trace the information to individuals.

Because of the low response rate to the Alaska Schools Survey, and because the time frames for our survey and the OASIS data base are different, we used *only* the data base for our analysis.

Organization of Report

Chapter II provides more detail about the Alaska Schools Survey and the OASIS data base. Chapter III provides a brief overview of national trends in special education. Chapter IV profiles Alaska's special education students. Chapter V describes the Special Olympics program in Alaska. The appendixes include the survey questionnaire, definitions of terms, copies of relevant documents, and detailed tables.

Chapter II. Research Methods

As we noted in the introduction, we originally hoped to collect information on Alaska's special education students through a survey of special education directors in the school districts. We ultimately didn't use any of the survey results in our analysis, because the response rate was too low. However, we did put a substantial amount of effort into the survey effort, as we describe below.

Survey Questionnaire

The advisory committee of the Special Olympics School Enrichment Program designed the questionnaire, including both the questions and the format. (A copy is included in Appendix A.) ISER contracted to administer the survey and analyze the results.

The questionnaire asked districts to provide general information about their schools and specific information about their special education students. The questionnaire began with questions about all students in the school district—by age group, ethnicity, and more—and then asked about students receiving special education. The questionnaire also asked respondents to divide schools in their districts into urban, rural, and remote sites and to report information for schools in each of those categories. That included requests for detailed information about special education students—by age and disability, by levels of special education, and by whether they were receiving adapted physical education or physical or occupational therapies.

Survey Administration

In December 2001, we e-mailed surveys to special education directors in each of the 53 Alaska school districts supervised and certified by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. We found contact information for those directors at the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development's Web site: http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/spe./spedcd/directors/director(1).html.

We asked the directors to complete the survey and return it to us—by e-mail or fax—within seven days. We provided contact information for anyone who had questions or wanted to reply via fax. When we discovered some e-mail addresses weren't working, we faxed copies of the survey. (A copy of the fax is in Appendix A.)

We told respondents who was sponsoring the survey; what the data were for; that participation was voluntary; and that survey results would be made available in a summary format only—without any personal or school district identifiers. Respondents would be considered to have given their implied consent if they participated in the survey via e-mail or fax. (A copy of the fax is included in Appendix A.) All survey responses—for this and the many other surveys ISER conducts—are locked in a file cabinet, with access limited to research staff.

After seven days (or sooner for districts where e-mail surveys couldn't be delivered) we followed up with e-mail messages and faxes. When responses were slow in arriving, we also called some of the school districts. (Follow-up faxes and e-mails are in Appendix A.)

Survey Response Rate

Despite our repeated efforts, just 8 of the 53 special education directors completed the survey—a response rate under 15 percent. Table 1 shows the disposition of all the school districts in the sample.

Table 1. Combined Survey Response Information	
Refusals	0
Respondent unavailable during the study	0
R mailed survey back to us/we didn't receive/won't repeat	0
No response	47
Complete interview	8
Total	**53**

The response rate is simply calculated as:

$$\frac{\text{Total \# of completed Interviews}}{\text{Number in the Original Sample}}$$

Although none of the special education directors refused outright to complete the survey, we understand that some said they couldn't respond to all the questionnaires and data requests they get—so they would only complete the survey if they were required to do so. They give priority to data requests that are required for the provision of services; these include data required by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, federal agencies, and some other organizations. Our survey was voluntary.

OASIS Data Set and IEP Information

Faced with an unacceptably low response rate—and having expended considerable effort without increasing that response rate—we began looking for other ways to provide the information the School Enrichment Program wanted. As described in Chapter I, we discovered that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development annually collects information on special education students. Since 2001, school districts have been required to provide that information electronically, and it is included in the department's On-Line Alaska School Information System (OASIS) data base.

In late 2000, we began discussions with the department about getting access to the data base. In spring 2002 we were able to obtain a portion of the raw data base, containing Individualized Education Plan (IEP) information for special education students as of October 2001. It is worthwhile to note that the file we received may not contain all the updates the department received, and therefore our figures may not match exactly with the published numbers. Anecdotally, a data manager told us that the October 2001 information we received was likely more accurate than the information the department

had for previous years, before the OASIS effort began.[5] Because of the low response rate to the Alaska Schools Survey, and because the time frames for our survey and the OASIS data base are different, we ultimately decided to use *only* the data base for our analysis. The Special Olympics School Enrichment Program was interested in information about special education students in urban, rural, and remote schools within the school districts. However, data made available to ISER were only at the district level—so we were able to do analysis only at that level. We did divide school districts into groups by enrollment. For each school district, the data set includes information about ages and disabilities of special education students and special education placement, including time students spend in regular classrooms. There are no individual identifiers. We analyzed the data using the Excel spreadsheet program.

Mission of OASIS

The Office of Assessments and Student Information in the Division of Teaching and Learning Support operates OASIS. The mission of OASIS is to maintain an efficient, secure information base of student-level information that may be shared among:

- Schools and school districts
- Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
- Post-secondary institutions
- Providers of children's social and health services
- Other state departments of education
- U.S. Department of Education

The program's objectives include:

> Establishing compatible data standards and a process for local education agencies to electronically share school data in a timely and cost-effective manner.
>
> Establishing an automated process for local education agencies to share school data with the state to more efficiently meet state and federal reporting requirements.
>
> Improving the accessibility and usefulness of information for educational research and evaluation.

The first operational use of OASIS for collecting student-level information was in the fall of the 1999-2000 school year. This initial funding was used to account for students claimed by districts. In Phase 2 of the OASIS project, conducted during the 2000-2001 school year, a pilot project collected special education and vocational education data. Full implementation was scheduled for the 2001-2002 school year.

[5] Conversation with data manager, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, Spring 2002.

CHAPTER III. SPECIAL EDUCATION TRENDS NATIONWIDE

Over the past several decades, the U.S. has seen a nationwide movement toward including children with disabilities in public schools and, to the extent possible, in classes with children who aren't disabled. In 1975, the federal government passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), guaranteeing children with disabilities the right to attend public schools and providing federal money to help pay for their education. Before 1975, many children with disabilities were excluded from public schools. In 1997, the law was amended to require that "to the maximum extent appropriate," children with disabilities be educated with students who are not disabled. Today, the majority of special education students spend at least a part of their school day in regular classes. [6]

Educators, parents, and others hope that placing special education students in regular classrooms has a number of benefits. Those include giving special education students a stronger curriculum, holding them to higher academic standards, and giving them more opportunities to improve their skills. On the other hand, students without disabilities can better learn to accept and appreciate those with disabilities—and in some cases benefit from special step-by-step teaching procedures developed for special education students.[7]

Nationwide, the number of children receiving services under IDEA increased from 3.7 million in 1977 to 6.5 million in the 1999-2000 school year.[8] Recent articles in the *Washington Post* and *Population Today* speculate about how demographic and other changes in recent times have contributed to the increase. Those changes include advances in medical care that allow many children to survive disabilities that might have been fatal in earlier times; broadening of the definition of "disabilities" to include more kinds of conditions; and more children living in poor families, which have limited access to medical care.[9]

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[6] *Twenty-five Years of Educating Children with Disabilities: The Good News and the Work Ahead*. Washington D.C., American Youth Policy Forum and Center on Education Policy, 2001.
[7] See note 7 above.
[8] See note 7 above.
[9] *Washington Post*, July 5, 2002, page B01, "U.S. Counts One in 12 Children as Disabled," by D'Vera Cohn; and *Population Today*, August/September 2001, "Emerging Trends in Disability," by Glenn Fujiura.

CHAPTER IV. ALASKA'S SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

In October 2001, Alaska had 17,950 special education students—or close to 14.5 percent of the roughly 124,000 students in the state's 53 school districts, excluding correspondence, boarding, and charter school students.[10] (See Appendix B, Table 4.) Special education students are those who have been diagnosed with at least one of the 14 categories of disability the state recognizes. Before profiling those students, below we first provide some background information on Alaska and its schools.

Background: Alaska and Its Schools

Alaska is the largest state in the nation—with 375 million acres, it is one-fifth the size of the contiguous states—but it has one of the smallest populations: about 635,000 in 2001. The population is both concentrated and dispersed. Nearly 70 percent of Alaskans live in four areas: Anchorage and the adjacent Mat-Su Borough in southcentral Alaska, the Fairbanks North Star Borough in the interior, and Juneau in southeast Alaska. There are a handful of other small cities, with populations under 10,000. And there are hundreds of small, scattered communities, many of which have populations of less than 100.

Alaska has 465 public schools in 53 school districts, with locally-elected school boards overseeing each. Among the 53 districts, 20 are large, rural districts in areas without city or borough government. The other 33 districts are in organized cities or boroughs. Enrollment in Alaska districts varies from nearly 50,000 in Anchorage to fewer than 100 in a number of small districts. Only 3 school districts have more than 10,000 students—but those 3 districts have 60 percent of Alaska's public school students. By contrast, there are 33 districts with fewer than 500 students; together those districts have about 8 percent of Alaska's public school students. (Tables 1 through 3 in Appendix B show enrollments in individual districts.) Some districts have both large, road-connected schools and smaller schools in places accessible only by air or water. Besides standard public schools, the state offers correspondence courses and operates Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a boarding school in Sitka that draws students from around Alaska. There are also several hundred private schools in the state.

Alaskans Ages 3-21

In Alaska, persons between the ages of 3 and 21 (the population eligible to be served by special education services) make up about 31 percent of the population. That compares with about 27 percent in that age group nationally. For a number of reasons, Alaska's population has historically been younger than the U.S. average; one reason is that few people retired here. In recent years, Alaska's older population has grown and the state population is moving more toward national averages.

In the 1990s, the 3-to-21 population in Alaska increased about 15 percent, compared with less than 13 percent nationally. The fastest increase was in the 6-to-17 age group, which grew nearly 25 percent. The 18-21 age group also increased, but only about 8 percent—

[10] That figure excludes the 10, 274 correspondence and 2,329 charter school students as well as the 331 students attending Mt. Edgecumbe boarding school as of October 2001. We excluded these students because in some districts—most notably Galena—the relatively large numbers of correspondence school students distort the analysis for those students who physically attend schools.

still, that was about twice the growth for that age group in the U.S. as a whole. Alaska's 3-5 age group actually shrank, losing about 10 percent, while nationally that age group increased by about 6 percent.

Enrollment in Alaska's schools—from pre-school through high school—also increased substantially between 1990 and 2000, up 21 percent—compared with an increase of less than 15 percent nationwide.

Analyzing and Comparing School Districts

School District Groupings

To analyze and compare school districts, we divided them into nine groups, by total enrollment: (1) 10,000 or more students; (2) 5,000-9,999; (3) 1,000-4,999; (4) 500-999; (5) 400-499; (6) 300-399; (7) 200-299; (8) 100-199; and (9) 10 to 99. (See the appendix for detailed enrollment figures for individual districts.) Map 1 on page 14 shows which districts are included in each group; the graph below the map shows how the share of special education students compares with share of total enrollment in the nine groups.

Distribution of School Districts

As Map 1 shows, the geographic size of a school district has little to do with the size of its enrollment. Anchorage, which has nearly 50,000 students, is one of the smallest districts in land area, while some of the districts with the largest land areas—Chugach and Yukon-Koyukuk, for instance—have only a few hundred students.

The three districts with more than 10,000 students (category "1" on Map 1) are on the state's main highway system, which covers a limited area of southcentral and interior Alaska. Some smaller districts in those regions—the Kenai Peninsula, for example—include schools both on and off the road system. But all the districts in the western and northern regions, and almost all those in the southeast, are far from highways. Many schools are in places accessible only by air or water.

Shares of Enrollment and Special Education Students

The graph at the bottom of Map 1 shows how the shares of special education students and total students compare in the various district categories. The largest districts (category 1) have a slightly higher share of special education students than of total students, while the next largest districts (categories 2 and 3) have somewhat smaller shares of special education students than of total students. In all other districts, the shares of all students and of special education students are just about equal.

Overview of Special Education Students

Below we provide a snapshot of Alaska's special education students; the later sections provide details and definitions.

Special Education Students as a Percentage of All Students

As Figure 1 (page 15) shows, special education students make up about 13 percent of Alaska's public school enrollment. That's just about the same share as special education students make up of publicly-funded students nationwide.

Distribution of Disabilities

By far the most common kinds of disabilities among Alaska's special education students are specific learning disabilities, as Figure 2 on page 15 shows. More than half the special education students have specific learning disabilities, which are disorders that cause children to have difficulty understanding or using spoken or written language. Examples of those kinds of disabilities are dyslexia and developmental aphasia.

Next most common, making up nearly a quarter of disabilities among special education students, are speech or language impairments. Other disabilities are less common, with developmental delays, emotional disturbances, and mental retardation each making up in the neighborhood of 5 percent of disabilities. Autism; hearing, sight, and orthopedic impairments; and traumatic brain injuries are far less common—altogether, children with such disabilities account for about 3 percent of special education students in Alaska.

Ages of Special Education Students

Alaskan children are eligible for publicly-funded special education services from the time they are 3 until they are 21. Nearly half (46 percent) are between 6 and 11; another 41 percent are 12 to 17. About 9 percent are pre-school children (ages 3 to 5) and the remaining 4 percent are between 18 and 21. (See Figure 3, page 15.)

Racial Composition of Special Education Students

Figure 4 (bottom of page 15) compares the racial composition of special education students (excluding pre-schoolers) in Alaska and nationwide with the racial composition of all those ages 6-21. The federal government has just begun collecting information by race, so we can't note any trends yet. But we can describe what the initial figures show.

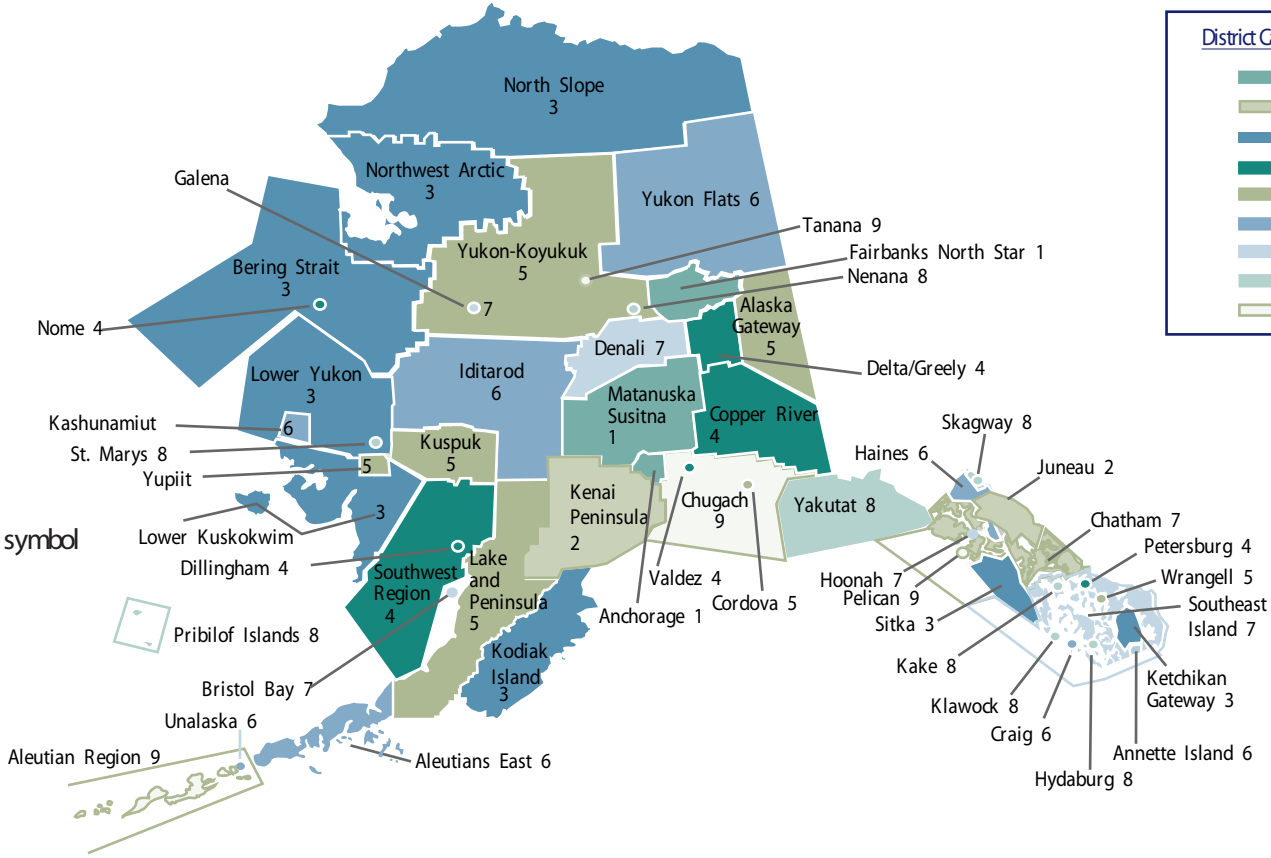
In several ways, the racial breakdown of special education students in Alaska is similar to the pattern nationwide. Black children make up a larger share of special education students than of the entire population 6-21 in both Alaska and the U.S., but the black population is proportionately much smaller in Alaska (4 percent) than in the entire U.S. (15 percent). Hispanic and Asian students make up a smaller share of special education students than they do of the general population. Also, in Alaska, white children make up a smaller share of special education students than of the general population, but nationwide those proportions are about the same.

But, as Figure 4 makes clear, the most significant difference is that Alaska Natives make up a much larger share of both Alaska's population and of special education students than do American Indians in the U.S. as a whole. Alaska Natives make up 31 percent of special education students in Alaska and 21 percent of all Alaskans ages 6-21. By contrast, American Indians make up only about one percent of all Americans ages 6-21 and about one percent of special education students.[11] (See detailed Tables 14, 15, and 27 in Appendix B.) We can't explain why Alaska Natives make up such a disproportionate share of special education students, but it is an issue policymakers should examine.

[11] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, *23rd Annual Report to Congress*.

Map 1. Alaska School Districts By Enrollment Categories*

(October 2000)



District Category	District Enrollment
1	10,000 or more
2	5,000 - 9,999
3	1,000 - 4,999
4	500 to 999
5	400 to 499
6	300 to 399
7	200 to 299
8	100 to 199
9	10 to 99

City districts shown by a ○ symbol

*Correspondence, charter-school, and boarding school students excluded in calculation of enrollments.

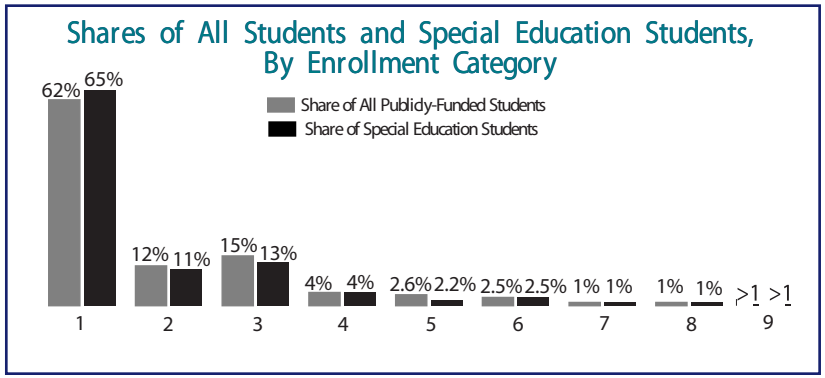
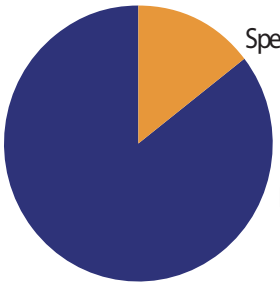


Figure 1. Alaska's Special Education Students as a Share of Publicly-Funded Students

(October 2001)



Special Education Students 17,950[a]
14.47%

Other Students 106,136
85.53%

Public School Enrollment, PE-12, 124,086[b]

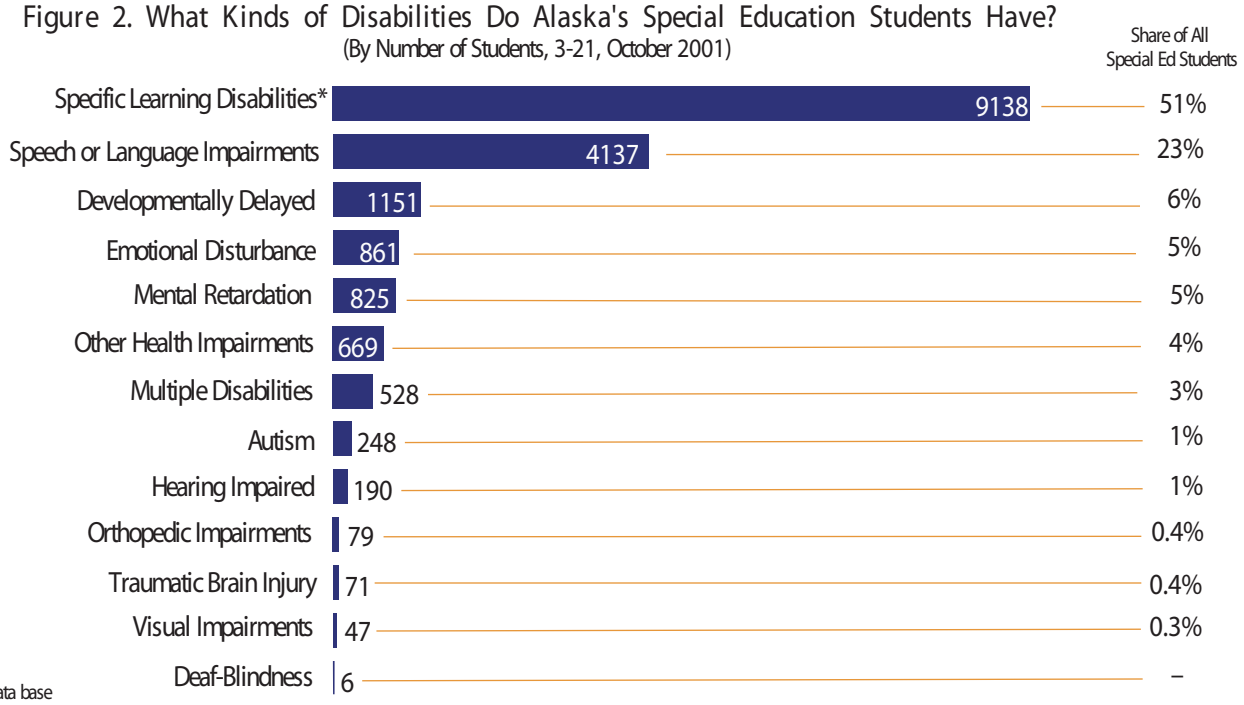
[a]Ages 3-21

[b]Excludes students in correspondence and charter schools and Mt. Edgecumbe high school.

Source: OASIS data base

Figure 2. What Kinds of Disabilities Do Alaska's Special Education Students Have?

(By Number of Students, 3-21, October 2001)

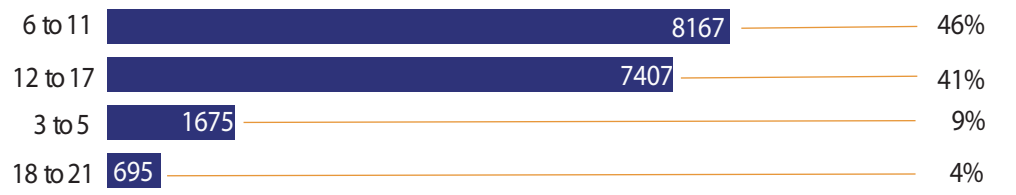


Source: OASIS data base

*Includes disorders that involve difficulty in understanding or using spoken or written language, such as dsylexia, developmental aphasia, and perceptual disabilities.

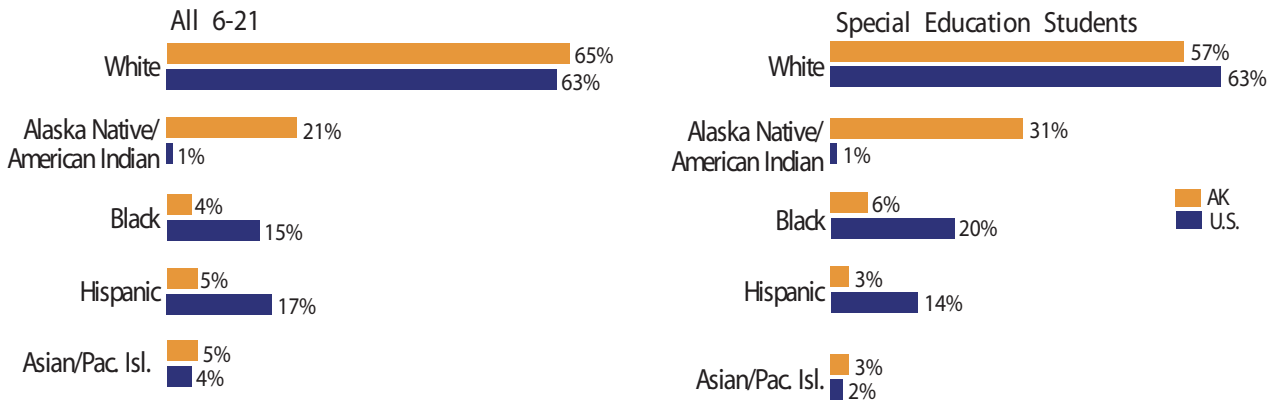
Figure 3. What is the Age Distribution of Alaska's Special Education Students?

(By Number of Students, 3-21, October 2001)



Source: OASIS data base

Figure 4. Comparing Racial Composition of Special Education Students and All 6-21, Alaska and U.S., 2001



Source: www.ideadata.org

Disabilities of Alaska's Special Education Students

Disability Categories and Definitions

Alaska uses 14 disability categories to determine whether a child is in need of special education and related services. (Eligibility criteria are listed in Appendix A.) To qualify for special education services, a child must not only have one of the listed disabilities, but that disability must create a learning impairment requiring specially-designed education.

The definitions listed below are excerpted from the *Alaska Special Education Handbook*, prepared by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.[12] All these disabilities must be diagnosed by doctors or other specialists.

1. *Autism* is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects educational performance. . . A child who manifests the above characteristics after age three may be diagnosed as having autism.

2. *Deafness* includes nearly total or total hearing loss, as diagnosed by a doctor or audiologist, hindering a child's ability to learn and requiring special facilities or equipment.

3. *Deaf-Blindness* is a combination of impairments—close to or total hearing and vision loss, causing communication and other developmental and educational problems.

4. *Early-Childhood Developmental Delay* occurs when a child functions at least two standard deviations below the national norm, or 25 percent delayed in age equivalency, in at least one of the following areas: cognitive development; physical development, which includes fine and gross motor skills; speech or language development, which includes expressive and receptive language, articulation, fluency, and voice; social or emotional development; adaptive-functioning, or self-help skills.
Or, a child can meet the following conditions: Functions at least 1.7 standard deviations below the mean, or 20 percent delayed in age equivalency, in two or more of the five areas listed above; has learning problems that are not primarily the result of bilingualism, cultural difference, environmental disadvantage, or economic disadvantage; and requires special facilities, equipment, or methods for an educational program.

5. *Emotional Disturbance* is diagnosed when a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period and to a marked degree that hurts educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms of fear associated with personal or school problems.

6. *Hearing Impairment*, whether permanent or fluctuating, limiting a child's ability to hear and hurting educational performance; not as severe as deafness (category 2 above).

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[12] Part III, Section 8. Eligibility Criteria For Disability Categories. The handbook is available online at :
www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/sped/Handbook02.

7. *Specific Learning Disabilities* are disorders in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language—spoken or written—that may manifest itself in impaired ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. The term "specific learning disability" includes perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. It does *not* include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, motor, or hearing disabilities; mental retardation; emotional disturbance; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages.

8. *Mental Retardation* is assessed when a child scores two or more standard deviations below the national norm on a standardized test of intelligence.

9. *Multiple Disabilities* means two or more of the impairments described in this section, the combination of which causes such severe education problems that cannot be accommodated in a special education program solely for one of the conditions.

10. *Orthopedic Impairments* may be caused by congenital anomalies, diseases, or other causes that are severe enough to impair a child's educational performance.

11. *Other Health Impairments* include (among others) heart conditions, tuberculosis, nephritis, asthma, sickle-cell anemia, hemophilia, epilepsy, leukemia, or diabetes. Health impairments may also result from a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, due to Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

12. *Speech or Language Impairments* are communication disorders that can include stuttering or other impaired articulation, as well as language or voice impairments that hurt a child's educational performance.

13. *Traumatic Brain Injuries* are caused by external physical forces—like car accidents—resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial maladjustment (or both) that make it hard for a child to learn. They do not include brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Traumatic brain injuries can include open or closed head injuries resulting in mild, moderate, or severe impairments in one or more areas: cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech.

14. *Visual Impairments* are those that result in 20/70 vision or poorer in the better eye, with correction—or a visual field restriction of 20 degrees—and that impair a child's ability to learn. Such impairments can also include a physical eye condition that affects a child's sight to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed

Figure 2, as we discussed earlier, shows how common the various disabilities are among Alaska's special education students statewide. Most of the students with disabilities of any given type are in the three largest categories of districts (1-3), where more than 80 percent of all special education students are enrolled. (See Table 2 on the next page.)

Table 2. Share of Special Education Students, by Disability, in the Largest Districts

District Size	10,000 plus		5,000 to 9,999		1,000 to 4,999		TOTAL STUDENTS	
	Number of Alaska SPED Students	Percent of Alaska SPED Students	Number of Alaska SPED Students	Percent of Alaska SPED Students	Number of Alaska SPED Students	Percent of Alaska SPED Students	Number of Alaska SPED Students	Percent of Alaska SPED Students
Disabilities								
Autism	164	66.1%	46	18.5%	15	6.0%	248	1.4%
DEAF-BLINDNESS	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	4	66.7%	6	0.0%
Developmentally Delayed	783	68.0%	81	7.0%	166	14.4%	1151	6.4%
Emotional Disturbance	614	71.3%	97	11.3%	88	10.2%	861	4.8%
Hearing Impaired	141	74.2%	18	9.5%	15	7.9%	190	1.1%
Mental Retardation	528	64.0%	63	7.6%	124	15.0%	825	4.6%
Multiple Disabilities	318	60.2%	60	11.4%	71	13.4%	528	2.9%
Orthopedic Impairments	49	62.0%	13	16.5%	6	7.6%	79	0.4%
Other Health Impairments	278	41.6%	117	17.5%	160	23.9%	669	3.7%
Specific Learning Disabilities	6156	67.4%	982	10.7%	1097	12.0%	9138	50.9%
Speech or Language Impairments	2493	60.3%	443	10.7%	597	14.4%	4137	23.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury	48	67.6%	13	18.3%	5	7.0%	71	0.4%
Visual Impairments	21	44.7%	8	17.0%	7	14.9%	47	0.3%
Total	11595	64.6%	1941	10.8%	2355	13.1%	17950	100%

Disabilities Among Age Groups

Figure 5 on page 20 shows how disabilities vary among Alaska's special education students of different ages.

About two-thirds of all disabilities among children 3 to 5 are developmental delays, and most of the rest are speech or language impairments. Some types of disabilities don't become apparent until children are older.

Among children 6 to 11, learning disabilities are most common (45 percent) but speech or language impairments are also frequent (37 percent). Mental retardation accounts for 4 percent of disabilities in this age group, and all other disabilities 8 percent.

By the time special education students are 12 to 17, learning disabilities make up more than two thirds of all disabilities, and speech or language impairments have shrunk to 8 percent. Emotional disturbances account for 8 percent of disabilities and all others 16 percent.

Among the oldest special education students—those 18 to 21—specific learning disabilities account for about half of all disabilities and mental retardation another 15 percent. Students with multiple disabilities account for 12 percent of students in this age group, and those with all other disabilities about 21 percent.

Prevalence of Disabilities Across Districts

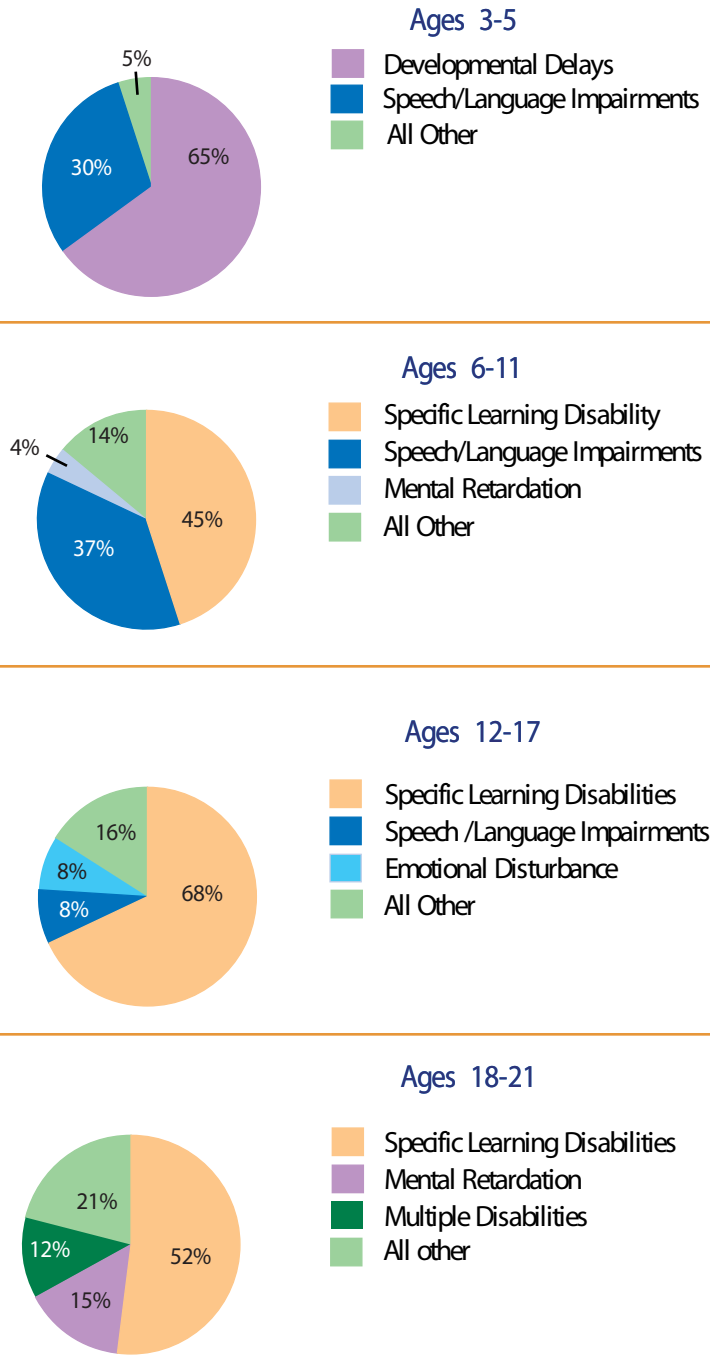
We found that the prevalence of many disabilities didn't vary across districts—for example, roughly 5 percent of special education students in most districts, large or small, had mental retardation. But a few differences stood out:

• Speech and language impairments are more common in smaller districts. In the five smallest categories of districts—those with enrollments between 10 and 499—speech and language impairments made up an average of 33.5 percent or all disabilities, compared with an average of 23 percent in districts statewide. In most of those small districts, the majority of students are Alaska Native. (The ethnic breakdown for all districts is available at www.eed.state.ak.us.stats.) Map 2 on page 21 shows the locations of the districts (5-9) with higher-than-average shares of speech and language impairments.

• Multiple disabilities are more common in school districts with enrollments of between 100 to 299 students (categories 7 and 8). In those specific districts, students with multiple disabilities made up 8.4 percent of all special education students, compared with 2.9 percent in districts statewide. See Map 3 on page 22.

• By contrast, developmental delays are less common in districts with between 100 and 299 students (categories 7 and 8). Only 1.5 percent of all special education students in these districts have developmental delays—compared with 6.4 percent in districts statewide. See Map 3.

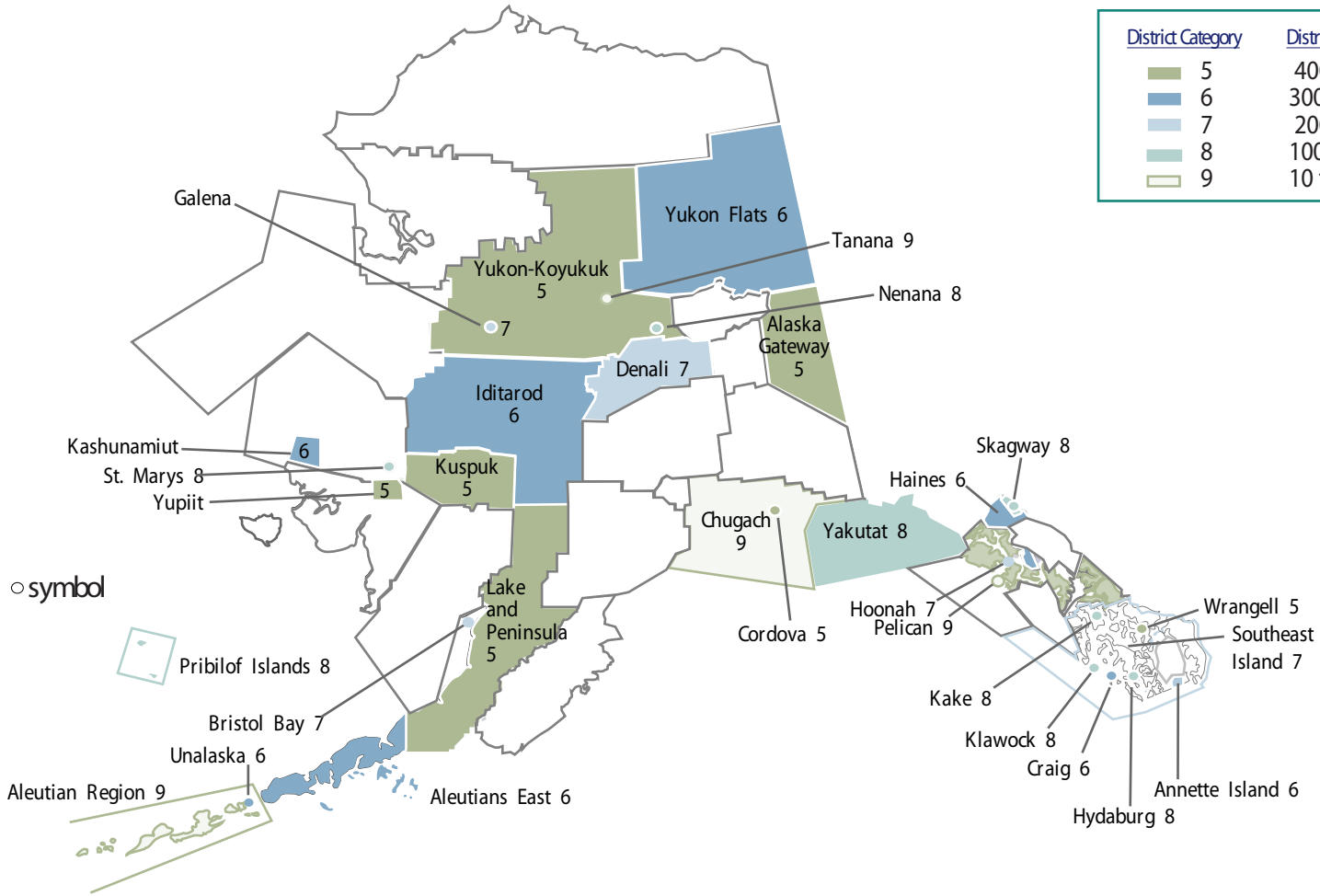
Figure 5. Most Common Disabilities of Alaska's Special Education Students, By age
(October 2001)



Source: OASIS data base

Map 2. Districts Where Speech or Language Impairments Are More Common

(As Share of All Disabilities, October 2000)

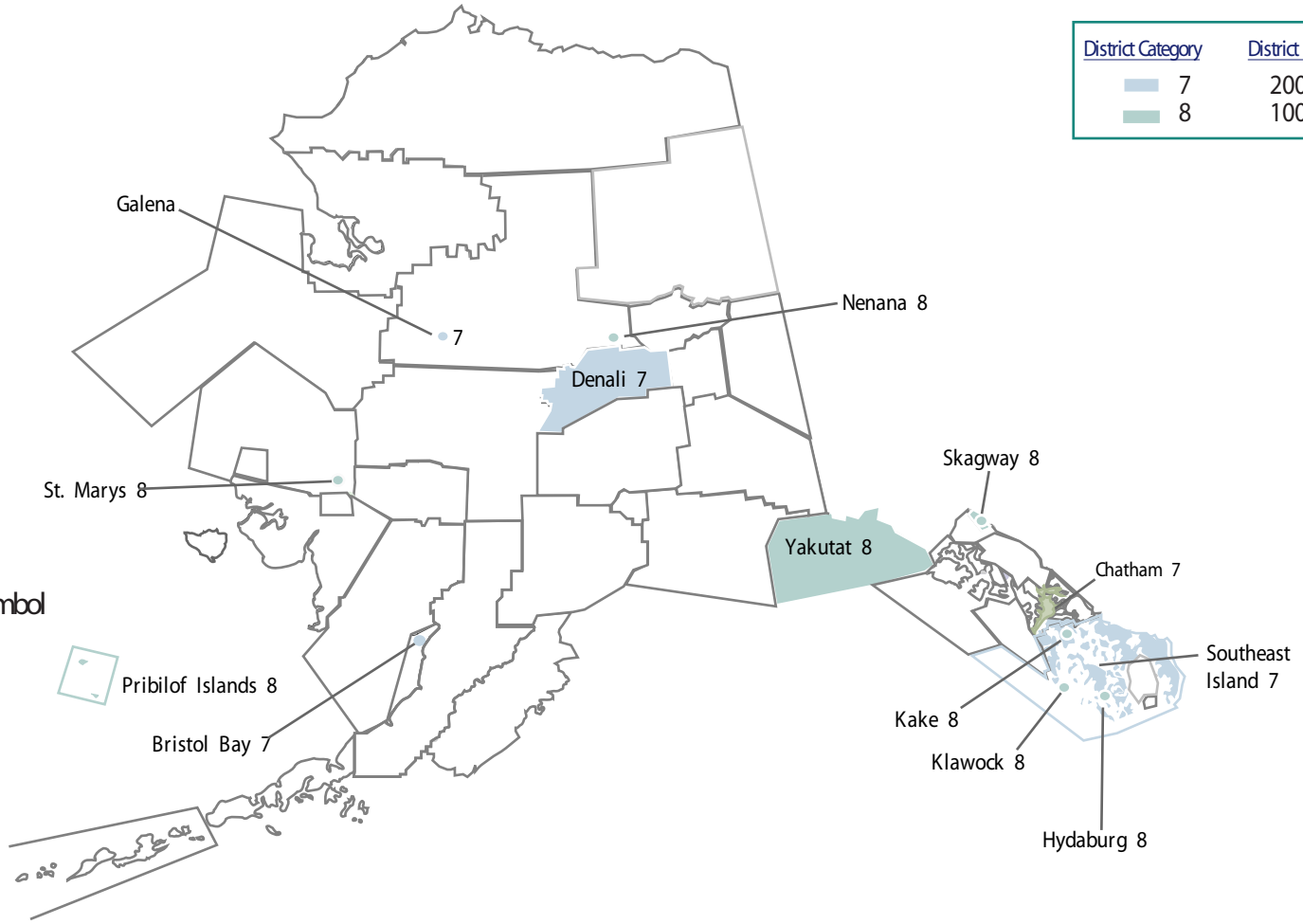


City districts shown by a ○ symbol

Speech/Language Impairments in Small Districts (5-9)	Speech/Language Impairments in All Districts (1-9)
33.5% of All Disabilities	23.0% of All Disabilities

Map 3. Districts Where Multiple Disabilities Are More Common and Developmental Delays Are Less Common

(As a Share of All Disabilities, October 2000)



City districts shown by a ○ symbol

Multiple Disabilities in Small Districts (7-8) 8.4% of All Disabilities	Multiple Disabilities Statewide (1-9) 2.9% of All Disabilites
Developmental Delays in Small Districts (7-8) 1.5% of All Disabilities	Developmental Delays Statewide (1-9) 6.4% of All Disabilites

Placement of Alaska's Special Education Students

Background on Placement

In June 1997, amendments to the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act became law. Those amendments say that "to the maximum extent appropriate," children with disabilities are to be educated with students who are not disabled. This law is to help insure that children with disabilities receive the same quality of education as other children do.

The 1997 law is the latest step in a nationwide movement toward including special education students in regular classrooms. Since 1975, Congress has required students with disabilities to be taught in the "least restrictive environment," which includes regular classrooms. And since the 1980s, more and more special education students have been spending a substantial part of the school day in regular classrooms. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs set a goal of having 50 percent of U.S. children (ages 6-21) with disabilities in regular classrooms at least 80 percent of the day by the 2000-2001 school year.

National data for the 2000-2001 school year aren't yet available, but by the 1997-98 year (the most recent year for which data are available), 46 percent of students with disabilities spent 80 percent or more of the day in regular classrooms, up from 31 percent in 1988-89.

That growing share of special education students in regular classrooms in the 1990s varied by disability type. The largest increase was among students with specific learning disabilities (up from 20 to 44 percent). The smallest increases occurred among students with multiple disabilities (up from 7 to 10 percent) and with severe hearing and sight loss (up from 12 to 14 percent). The percentage of students with disabilities who are educated in separate facilities declined among students of all disability types (for which data exist), except those with visual impairments.[13]

Placement Options and Settings

In Alaska, school districts must insure that a continuum of placements is available at all times for children with disabilities who need special education and related services. Also, schools must develop individualized education programs (IEPs) for special education students. The range of special education placements includes a number of options, as described in the Alaska Special Education Handbook; the descriptions below are excerpted from that handbook.[14]

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[13] *The Condition of Education, Quality of Elementary Education and Secondary Environments, Special Programs, Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Regular Education Classrooms*. See: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2001/section4/indicator40.html

[14] See note 12 above.

Options

Option 1. The child remains in the regular classroom, with additional support services as needed. The teacher or child is provided with special equipment and supplies, special transportation, para-educator services, or other supportive services. The regular classroom teacher or para-educator conducts classroom activities, while the special education teacher or therapist works with the regular classroom teacher or para-educator to implement the IEP.

Option 2. The child remains in the regular classroom, but receives direct services from special education personnel. A special education teacher or therapist works with the regular teacher and provides instruction to an eligible child whose needs can be met with part-time support. The instruction may be on an individual or small group basis and is always coordinated with the regular class activities.

Option 3. The child receives as much of the regular classroom instruction as appropriate, with additional instruction provided by a special education teacher or therapist in a "pull-out" program—that is, a program that pulls the student out of the regular class for part of the day. The duration of time spent with the teacher or therapist is determined by the degree of intervention necessary to meet an individual child's needs. The instruction may be provided on an individual or small group basis and is always coordinated with the regular class activities.

Option 4. The child receives any regular classroom instruction from which he or she can benefit, but most instruction is provided in a self-contained special education classroom. Interaction with children without disabilities may occur in the regular classroom and in non-academic and extra-curricular activities as determined by the IEP Team.

Option 5. The child receives all instruction in a separate day school, but that separate instruction is supplemented by involvement in those parts of the regular school program that are appropriate.

Option 6. The school provides instructional or supportive services provided to a child in his own home, in a convalescent home, or in a hospital. A physician must certify in writing, and the IEP must provide, that the child's physical, mental, or emotional condition does not permit attendance at a school.

Option 7. The child lives in an institutional setting and receives all instruction in that setting. The IEP will cite possible opportunities for children in institutions to spend time with children without disabilities.

There are also a number of placement options for preschool children with disabilities:

Option 1. Home-based services.

Option 2. Preschool classrooms located in regular elementary schools or other preschool programs operated by public agencies (such as Head Start).

Option 3. District-operated preschool programs.

Option 4. Preschool classrooms in private preschools.

Option 5. Preschool classrooms located in facilities that serve only children with disabilities.

A combination of these options may be provided to a child, if there's a demonstrated need and the IEP team recommends it.

Settings

The options described above are put into effect through specific placement settings. In our analysis of the OASIS data base, we found 16 special education placement settings, defined in Alaska DEED Form #05-99-008, Table 3, Special Education Placement. The placement definitions listed below are excerpted from the specific instructions for the completion of this table. (A copy of these instructions is in Appendix A.) The categories are not on any kind of continuum from least to most restrictive; they are alphabetical.[15]

1**.** *Early Childhood Setting*. Educational programs designed primarily for children without disabilities. No education or related services are provided in separate special education settings. These may include, but are not limited to: regular kindergarten classes; public or private preschools; Head Start centers; child care facilities; preschool classes offered to an eligible pre-kindergarten population by the public school system; home/early childhood combinations; home/Head Start combinations; other combinations of early childhood settings.

2. *Early Childhood, Special Education Setting*. Educational programs designed primarily for children with disabilities, housed in regular school buildings or other community-based settings. No education or related services are provided in early childhood settings. These may include, but are not limited to: special education classrooms in regular school buildings; special education classrooms in child care facilities, hospital facilities on an outpatient basis, or other community-based settings; special education classrooms in trailers or portables outside regular school buildings.

3**.** *At Home***.** Principal residence of the child's family or caregivers.

4**.** *Part-Time Early Childhood/Part-Time Early Childhood Special Education Setting***.** At home or in educational programs designed primarily for children *without* disabilities, and special education and related services are provided in programs designed primarily for children *with* disabilities. These may include, but are not limited to: home/early childhood special education combinations; Head Start, child care, nursery school facilities, hospital facilities on an outpatient basis, or other community-based settings with special education provided outside of the regular class; regular kindergarten classes with special education provided outside of the regular class; separate school/early childhood combinations; residential facility/early childhood combinations.

5**.** *Residential Facility***.** Publicly or privately operated residential schools or residential medical facilities on an inpatient basis.

6. *Separate School***.** Educational programs in public or private day schools specifically for children with disabilities.

7. *Itinerant Service Outside the Home (Optional).* School, hospital facility on an outpatient basis, or other location for a short period of time (i.e., no more than 3 hours per week). (This does not include children receiving services at home; those children are reported elsewhere.) These services may be provided individually or to a small group of children. This may include, but is not limited to, speech instruction for up to 3 hours per week in a school, hospital, or other community-based setting.

8**.** *Reverse Mainstream Setting (Optional).* Educational programs designed primarily for children with disabilities but that include 50 percent or more children without disabilities.

[15] AKDOE Form #05-99-008, Table 3, Part B, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Implementation of FAPE Requirements, Table3. Early Childhood Placement. A copy is in Appendix A.

9. *Special education outside regular class less than 21 percent of day*. This may include children with disabilities placed in: regular class with special education or related services provided in that regular class; regular class with special education or related services provided outside regular classes; regular class with special education services provided in resource rooms.

10. *Special education outside regular class at least 21 percent of day and no more than 60 percent of day.* This may include children placed in: resource rooms with special education or related services provided in the resource room; resource rooms with part-time instruction in regular classes.

11. *Special education outside regular class more than 60 percent of day*. This category does not include children who receive education programs in public or private separate day or residential facilities. It may include children placed in: self-contained special classrooms with part-time instruction in a regular class; self-contained special classrooms with full-time special education instruction on a regular school campus.

12. *Public separate facility*. Special education and related services for more than 50 percent of the school day in public separate facilities. This may include children in: public day schools for students with disabilities; public day schools for students with disabilities for a portion of the school day(more than 50 percent) and in regular school buildings for the remainder of the school day.

13. *Private separate facility*. Special education and related services, at public expense, for more than 50 percent of the school day in private separate facilities. This may include children placed in: private day schools for students with disabilities; private day schools for students with disabilities for a portion of the school day (more than 50 percent) and in regular school buildings for the remainder of the school day.

14. *Public residential facility*. Special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public residential facilities. This may include children placed in: public residential schools for students with disabilities; public residential schools for students with disabilities for a portion of the school day (more than 50 percent) and in separate day schools or regular school buildings for the remainder of the school day.

15. *Private residential facility*. Special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private residential facilities. This may include children placed in: private residential schools for students with disabilities; private residential schools for students with disabilities for a portion of the school day (more than 50 percent) and in separate day schools or regular school buildings for the remainder of the school day.

16. *Homebound/Hospital*. Includes children with disabilities placed in and receiving special education and related services in: hospital programs; homebound programs

Appendix B includes a detailed table showing numbers of Alaska special education students in each of these settings as of October 2001.

Placement Statewide
Nearly all—90 percent—of Alaska's special education students spend at least some of the school day in regular classrooms, as Figure 6 on page 28 shows. More than half spend 80 percent of the day in regular classrooms. Another 25 percent spend a substantial part of the day (between 40 and 80 percent of the time) in regular classrooms. Yet another 12 percent are in regular classrooms at least 20 percent of the day. About 4 percent are in early-childhood special education settings. The remaining 6 percent are in various placements that include separate special-education classrooms and schools.

Placement by Age
Placements vary among special education students of different ages, as Figure 7 (page 28) shows. Most of the youngest children (3-5) are in various early childhood settings, which may or may not be separate special education settings. Among children 6-11, more than two-thirds spend most of their school day in regular classrooms, and all but 3 percent spend at least some time in regular classrooms. A shift occurs among those 12-17, with less than half spending most of their day in regular classrooms. Still, except for 3 percent, all spend at least part of the day in regular classrooms. Finally, among those 18-21, only about a third spend most of the day in regular classrooms, with another third mostly *outside* regular classes.

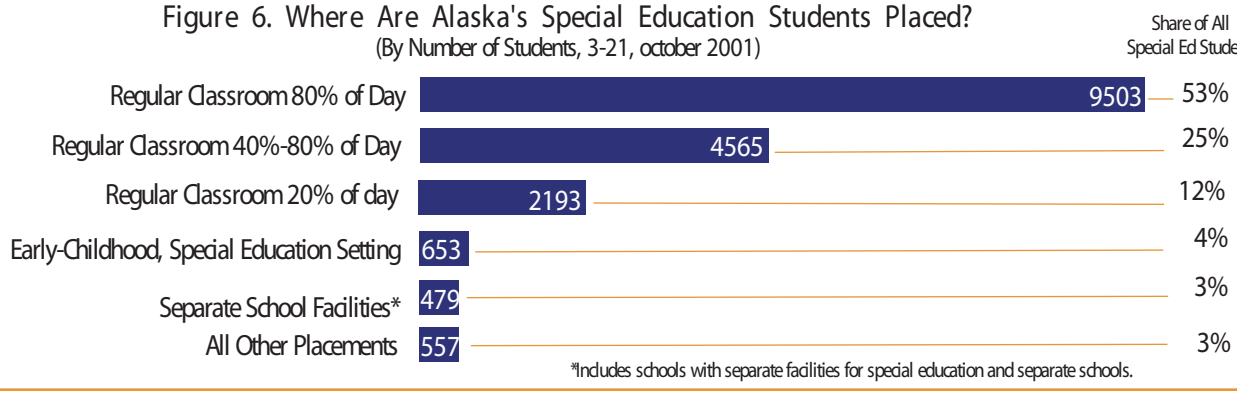
Comparing Placements in Alaska and U.S.
Figure 8 (page 29) shows how placement of special education students differs between Alaska and the entire U.S. In 2000, Alaska was considerably ahead of the nation in placing special education students in regular classrooms. Excluding pre-schoolers, 59 percent of Alaska's special education students spent most of their day in regular classes, compared with 47 percent nationwide. Only about 2.5 percent of Alaska's special education students did not spend at least some time in regular classrooms, compared with 5 percent nationwide.

Students Most and Least Likely to be in Regular Classrooms
Figure 9 (page 29) shows which special education students in Alaska and nationwide are most and least likely to spend most of their day (80 percent) in regular classrooms. Those with speech or language impairments are by far the most likely to spend most time in regular classrooms—as of 2000, 92 percent of Alaska students and 87 percent of all U.S. students. Also likely to spend the most time in regular classrooms are students with visual impairments, specific learning disabilities, and orthopedic or other health impairments. Again, as Figure 9 shows, Alaska is ahead of the U.S. average in placing students with all those disabilities in regular classrooms.

The least likely to be in regular classrooms for most of the day are those with autism, multiple disabilities, and mental retardation. Only around 15 percent of students with those disabilities spend a large part of the day in regular classrooms. Still, most students with all kinds of disabilities spend at least some time in regular classrooms.

Figure 6. Where Are Alaska's Special Education Students Placed?

(By Number of Students, 3-21, october 2001)

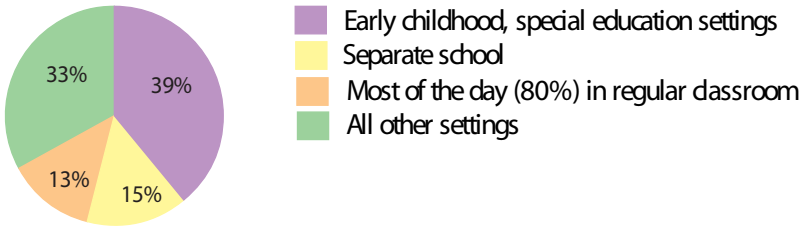


*Includes schools with separate facilities for special education and separate schools.

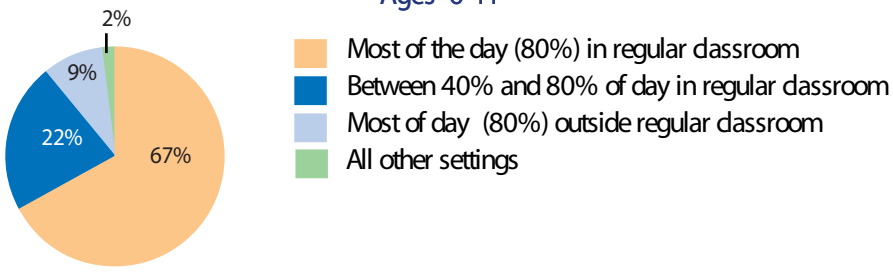
Figure 7. Placement of Alaska's Special Education Students, By Age

(October 2001)

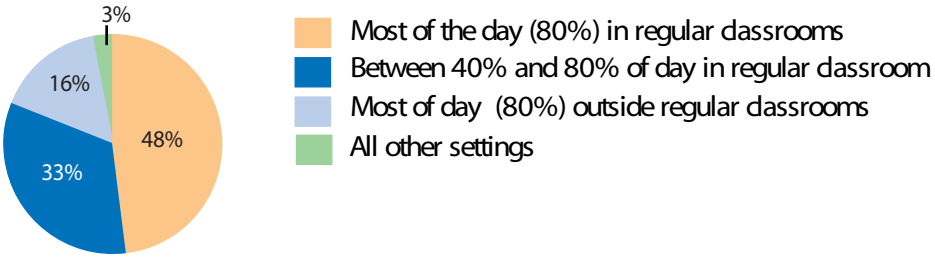
Ages 3-5



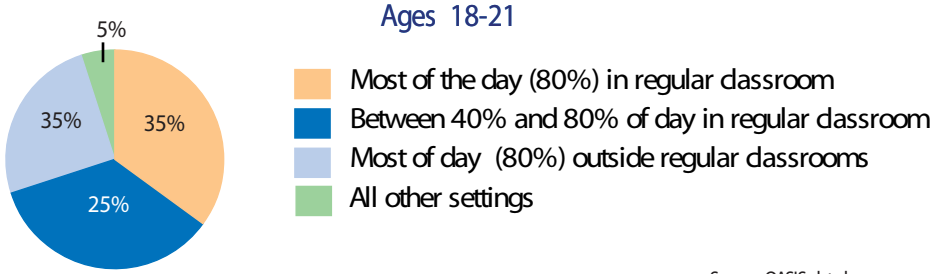
Ages 6-11



Ages 12-17



Ages 18-21



Source: OASIS data base

Figure 8. Comparing Placement of Special Students Alaska and U.S.
(In Percentages of Students, 6-21)

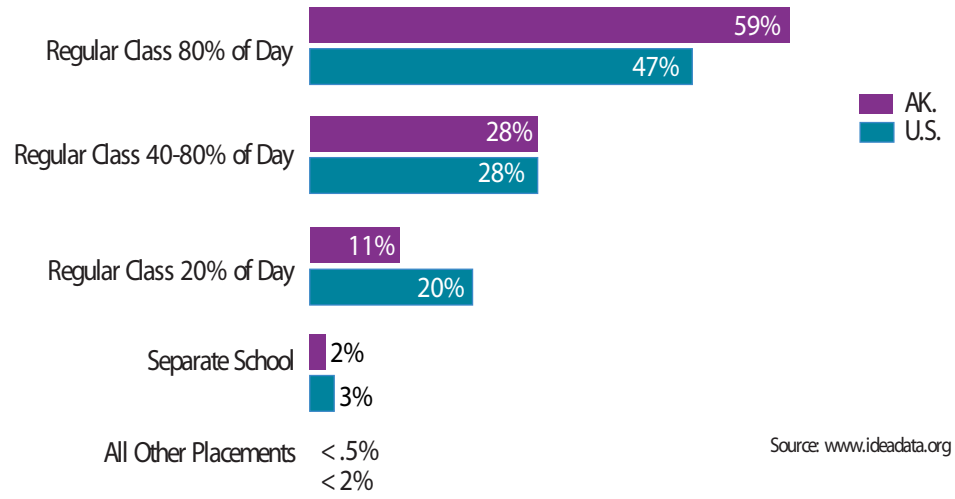
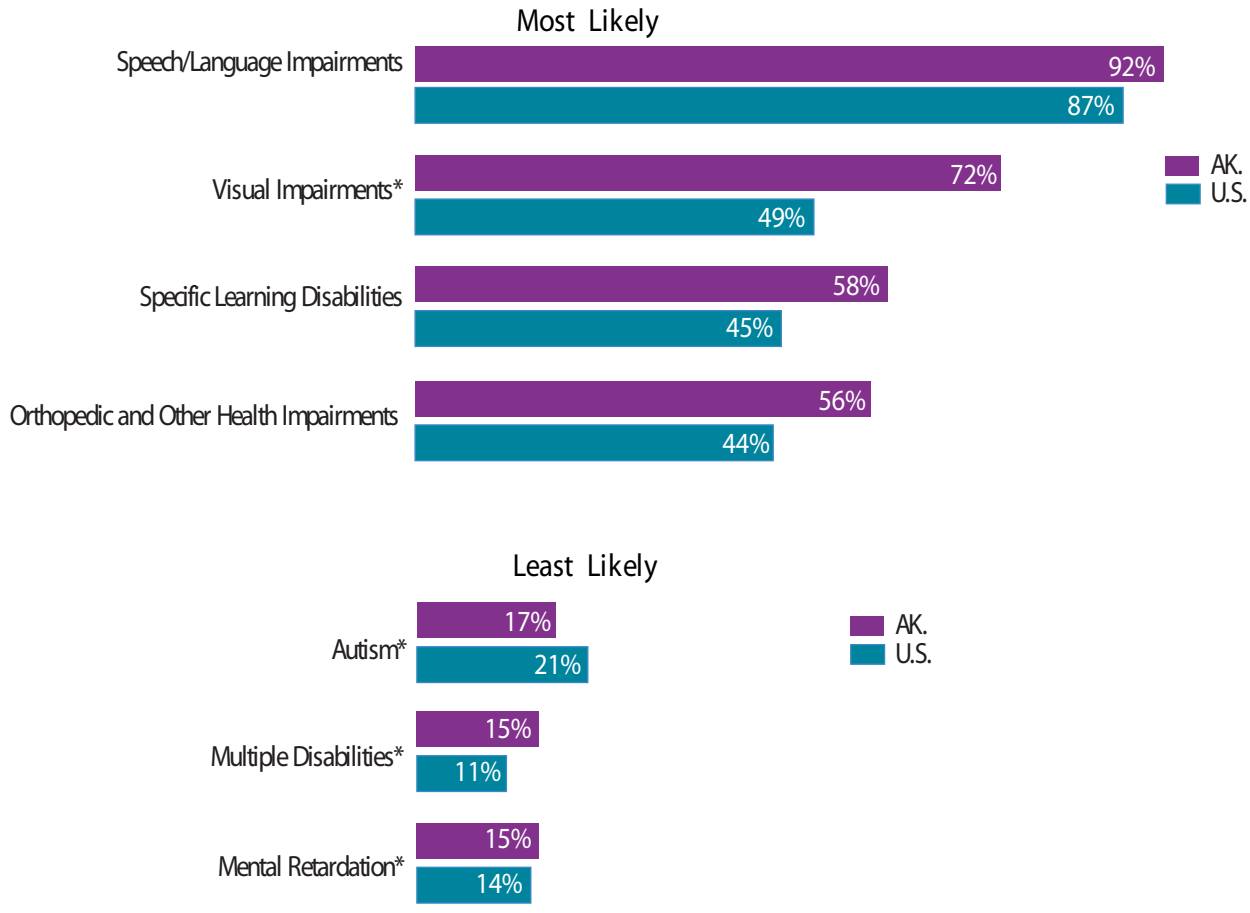


Figure 9. Which Special Education Students Are Most and Least Likely to be in Regular Classrooms 80% of Day?
(In Percentages of Students, 6-21)



*Numbers of Alaska children with these disabilities are small.
Source: www.ideadata.org

Differences in Placement Among Districts

Largest Districts (10,000 or more students)

Overall, districts with 10,000 or more students (category 1) have about 64 percent of special education students statewide—but the shares of students in different placements vary considerably. Virtually all the students in four placements—private residential facilities, public and private separate school facilities, and completely separate schools—were in the largest districts in October 2000. For five other placements, very few (between 0 and 10 percent) of special education students are in the largest districts; those placements are early-childhood setting; enrolled in private school and not placed or referred by public agency; home; reverse mainstream; and served at correctional facility. For the seven remaining special education settings, between 50 and 89 percent of special education students are in the largest districts. Map 4 on page 31 shows locations of the largest districts and provides more placement information.

Middle Districts (Enrollments Between 500 and 9,999 Students)

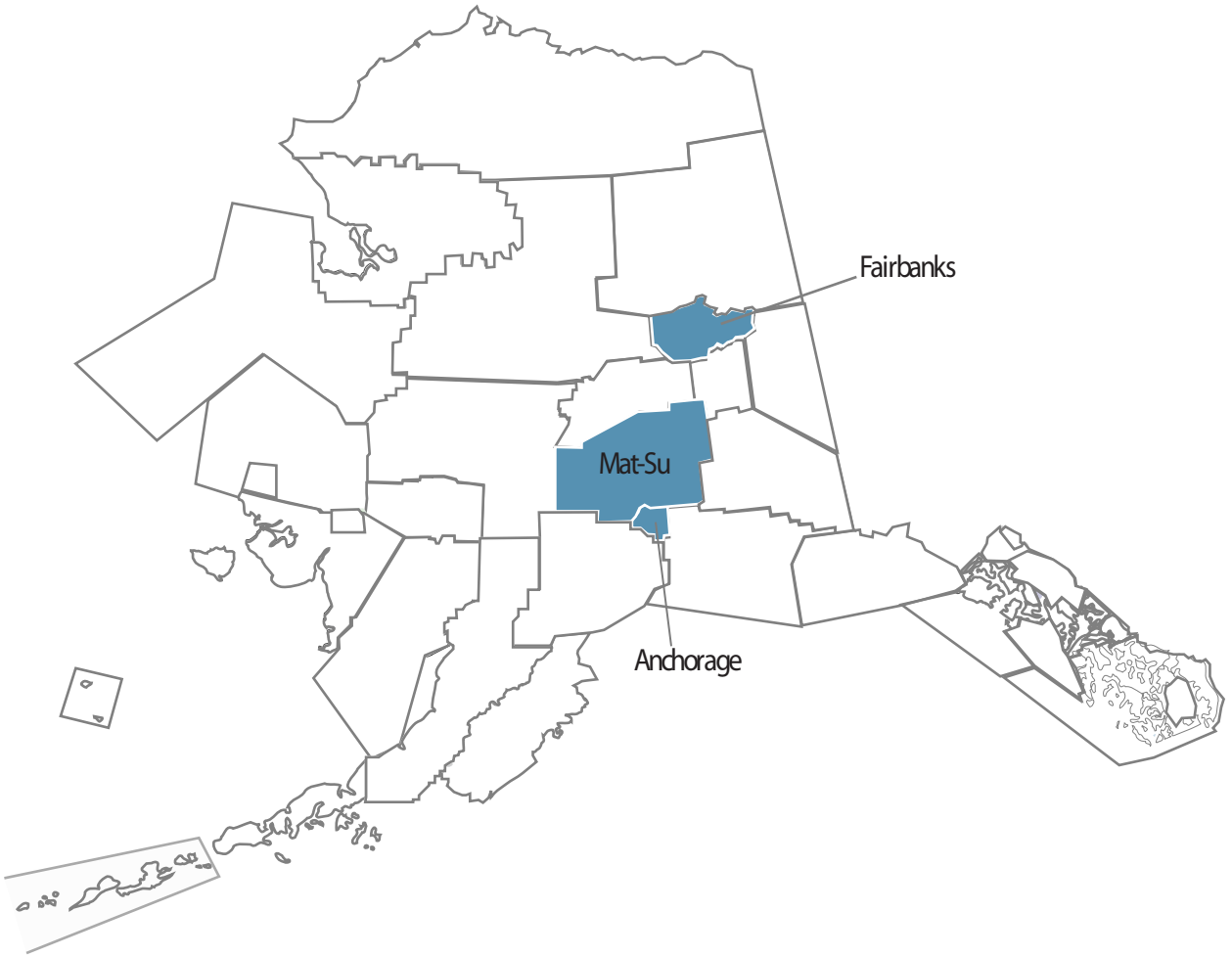
These 17 districts include some of Alaska's larger communities (Juneau and other southeast communities and cities on the Kenai Peninsula in southcentral) as well as a number of more rural districts along the western and northern coasts, with regional centers like Bethel, Barrow, and Nome. In these districts, as is true statewide, most special education students spend at least a part of their school day in regular classrooms—91 percent spend at least some of the day, and 60 percent spend most of the day. Two-thirds of the students in early childhood settings are in these districts, as are 90 percent of those served in correctional facilities. (But as of October 2001, only 20 special education students were in correctional facilities statewide.) And all the students who were enrolled in private schools but hadn't been referred by public agencies (there were only 19 in October 2001) attended school in these middle districts. Map 5 on page 32 shows locations of these districts and more placement information.

Smallest Districts (Under 500 Students)

More than half of Alaska's school districts (33 of 53) have enrollments of fewer than 500 students. Special education students in these small districts are heavily concentrated in regular classrooms, with 66 percent spending most of the day in regular classes and 93 percent spending at least some of the day. A number of the placement options we just described aren't available in the smallest communities. Most of the special education students who aren't in regular classrooms are pre-schoolers in one of the early-childhood placements. In most other placements, there are either no students or at most a handful. Map 6 on page 33 shows locations and placement information about these districts.

Map 4. Special Education Placements in Largest Districts

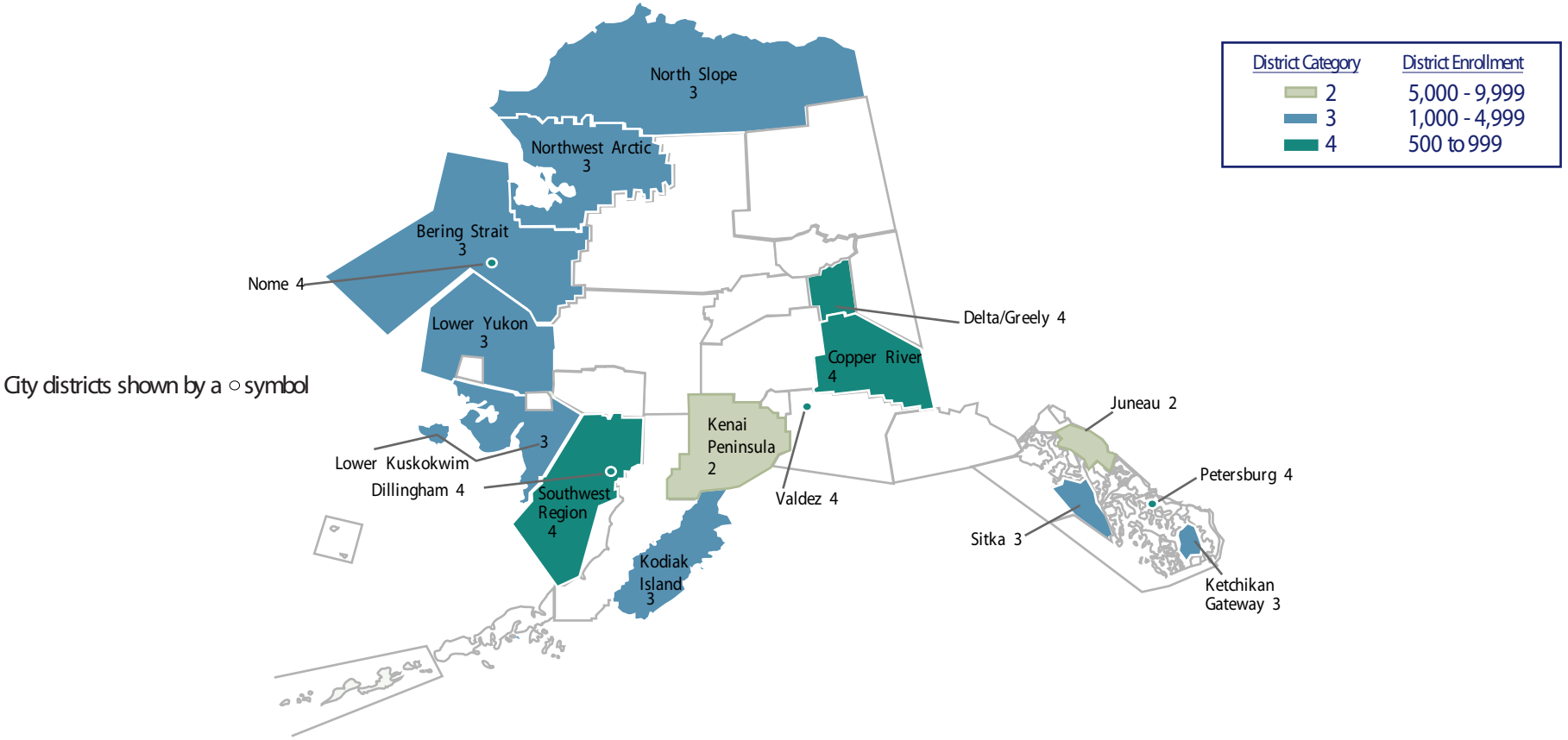
(Category 1 - Districts with 10,000 or More Students, October 2000)



- Nearly 65% of all special education students statewide are in these districts, but the shares in different placement categories vary from 0 to 89%.
- Nine in 10 special education students spend at least part of the day in regular classrooms.
- Less than half (48%) spend most of of the day in regular classrooms in the largest districts.
- More students (15%) in these districts spend most of the day outside regular classrooms, compared with about 7% percent in small districts (under 500 students).
- Almost all students who attend classes in separate facilities within schools or in separate schools are in these large districts.

Map 5. Special Education Placements in Middle Districts

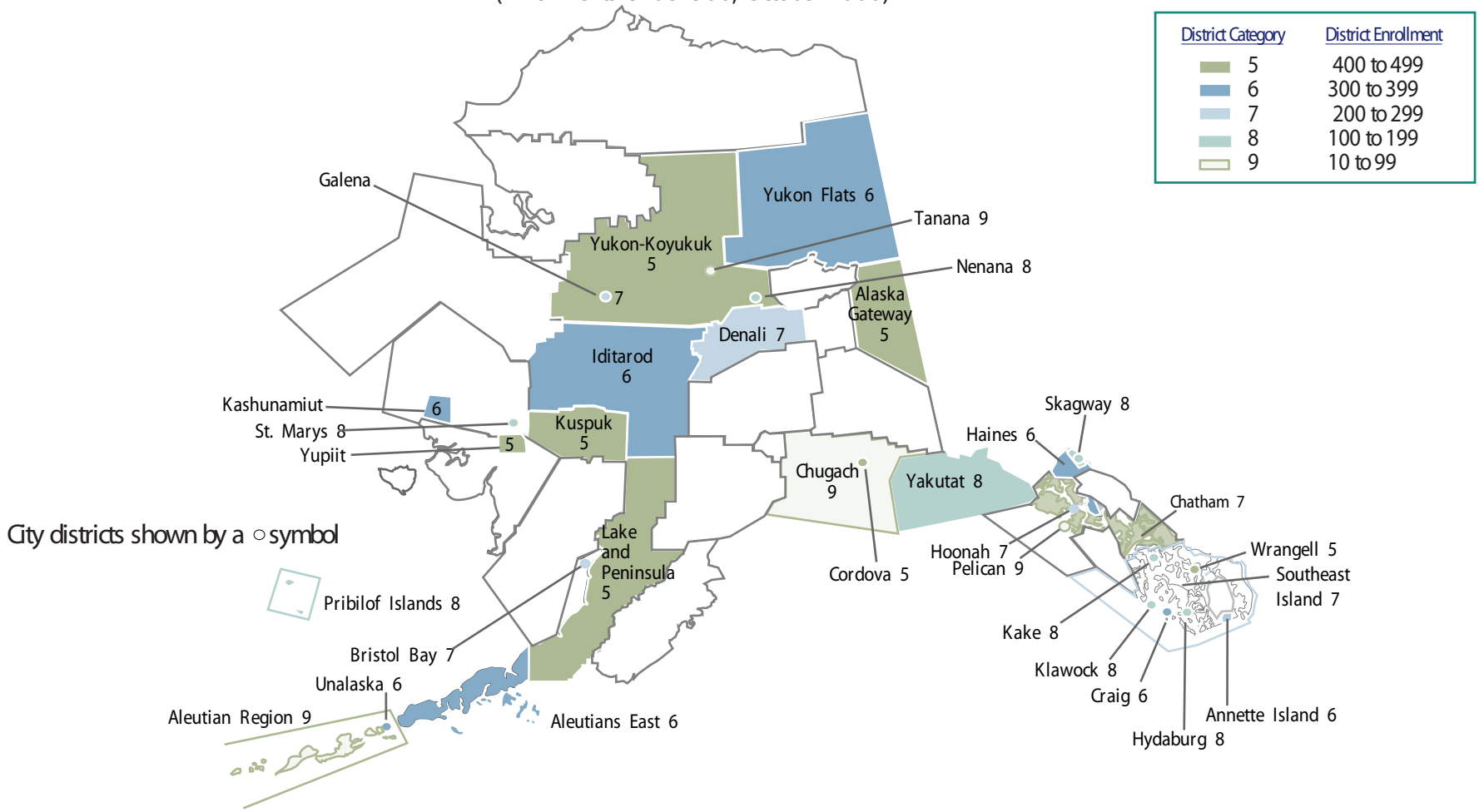
(Enrollment Between 500 and 9,999, October 2000)



- About 91 percent of special education students spend some time in regular classrooms, and 60 percent spend most of the day.
- Two-thirds of those enrolled in early-childhood settings are in these districts.
- About 40 percent of those who split their time between early-childhood setting and early-childhood special education settings are in these districts.
- Almost all the students served in correctional facilities are in these districts–but the numbers are small.
- A few (about 6%) of the students who attend classes in separate facilities within public schools are in districts with 5,000-9,999 students. (The other 94% are in districts with over 10,000 students.)
- All of those who are enrolled in private schools but weren't referred by public agencies are in these districts–but the numbers are small.

Map 6. Special Education Placements in Small Districts

(Enrollments Under 500, October 2000)



- Almost all special education students (93%) spend time in regular classrooms.
- Two-thirds (66%) spend most of the day in regular classrooms.
- Most of the 7% not in regular classrooms are pre-schoolers in early-childhood settings.
- In other placements, there are either no students or at most a handful.

CHAPTER V. SPECIAL OLYMPICS IN ALASKA

Special Olympics Alaska began in Fairbanks in 1969, and Alaska now has 17 local area programs and four school programs. These Alaska programs have the same goals as programs nationwide. As we discussed in the introduction, the programs give children and adults with mental disabilities the opportunity to compete in athletic events. But other important program goals are helping bring special education students into regular classrooms—to learn with children who are not disabled—and encouraging special education students and other students to take part in joint sports and other activities.

The local area programs are the most familiar. These are community-based programs, in which volunteers work with the athletes—who can be any age from 8 on up—to help them prepare for local competitions and train for statewide or international games. Local area programs can serve more than one community, and in 2001 the state's programs prepared delegations from 20 communities to take part in special events; those delegations included 822 athletes. Map 7 (page 35) shows that most of the local area programs are in the state's most populated areas and along the highway system — including Seward and Soldotna on the Kenai Peninsula; Anchorage and Wasilla in southcentral Alaska; and Fairbanks in the interior. There are also programs in the largest communities in southeast Alaska—Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan. And there are some programs in more remote, smaller places around Alaska—from Kodiak on the south to Barrow in the far north.

The school programs are new to Alaska, beginning in 2000. Under school programs, only student athletes can take part, and teachers and other school personnel help. The aim of school programs is not statewide or international competition but rather bringing students with and without disabilities together in sports. Typically, schools with these programs establish intramural teams within the school. Schools use existing resources to help organize these programs; the Special Olympics program can help by providing training, facilities, equipment, or funding.

The school programs that had been established by 2002 are in four of the larger districts—Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Kodiak—but the Special Olympics Alaska program hopes to more than double that number in 2003. There is ample opportunity to draw more school-age athletes into the Special Olympics program. As Figure 10 (at the bottom of Map 7) shows, half the athletes in Alaska's Special Olympics local area programs are older than school age, and most of the rest are teenagers. By contrast, half of Alaska's special education students are under age 11.

In the 2000-2001 school year, about 355 athletes took part in the Special Olympics school programs. Of those, 195 had previously taken part in Special Olympics local areas programs and 160 were new to Special Olympics.

Map 7. Local Area Programs, Special Olympics Alaska 2002

Note: The map shows headquarters communities for local area programs, which may serve more than one community. These programs prepare delegations to take part in Special Olympics events.

Figure 10. Comparing Alaska's Special Olympic Athletes and Special Education Students, By Age (2001)